

This Week in Congress

February 6, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." Today I am traveling to North Carolina for the first of ten field hearings the House Committee on Agriculture is conducting across the country to review the 2002 Farm Bill and prepare for the next Farm Bill in 2007. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

President Bush Addresses Congress for State of the Union

On Tuesday, I returned to Washington, D.C., for the beginning of the 2006 congressional session. President George W. Bush addressed Congress and the nation in the annual State of the Union speech.

The United States Constitution states, "The President shall from time to time give to Congress information of the State of the Union and recommend to their Consideration such

measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.” President George Washington delivered the first speech of this kind on January 8, 1790. The State of the Union gives the President an opportunity to reflect on the past while presenting his goals for the future to Congress, the American people and the world.

President Bush focused on global terrorism, health care, the federal budget and energy. He addressed several issues important to Kansans, including increasing research on alternative fuels, such as ethanol; reducing our dependence on foreign oil; and improving the health care system by confronting the issue of rising costs. During these tough times abroad and at home, it will be important for Congress to put aside differences and work together to improve our states and nation.

House Republicans Elect New Majority Leader

This week Representative John Boehner (OH-8) was elected the new Majority Leader of the House of Representatives. New leaders give us new opportunities to improve how we do business in Congress. I look forward to working with Majority Leader Boehner as we address the way Congress operates.

Northwest Kansas Counties Receive Disaster Designation

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) just recently declared Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace counties as primary natural disaster areas due to losses caused by drought, high winds and excessive heat. Bordering counties of Greeley, Logan, Rawlins, Thomas and Wichita were also designated as disaster areas. This gives qualified producers access to low-interest loans through the USDA. While not a permanent solution to drought and extreme weather, these designations and access to loans help producers pay the bills and stay in business during these hard times.

Attending the Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting

On Monday evening, I attended the annual Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce meeting. The Honorable Deanell Reece Tacha, Chief Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, served as the keynote speaker and spoke about our duty as citizens to preserve our democratic institutions of government for future generations of Americans. Chief Judge Tacha is a native Kansan, and in 1985 was nominated by President Reagan to the Tenth Circuit based in Denver. She was promoted to Chief Judge of the Tenth Circuit in 2001, a position she holds to this day at her chambers in Lawrence. Most recently, Judge Tacha's name was mentioned in legal and political circles as a potential nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court seat vacated by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

Also at the meeting, Kirk Johnson, my District Director, was installed as the new board chairman for 2006. Kirk has been instrumental to the success of my office, and I have confidence he will use that dedication and record of success to better his community throughout this year.

From Hope to Paradise: Continuing My Big First Listening Tour

As part of my Big First Tour, I was in Pretty Prairie, Strong City and Sylvan Grove last week. Emporia State University President Kay Schallenkamp joined me while I was in Strong City. President Schallenkamp recently announced she will be leaving Emporia State to take a similar position at Black Hills State University. It is bittersweet seeing President Schallenkamp return to her home state of South Dakota. She has not only been a close advisor to me on a wide range of issues, but she has also been a great leader in Kansas and has made a tremendous difference at Emporia State. I wish her all the best in her new position. It will be a challenge to replace her.

On Thursday I will make stops in Leoti in Wichita County, Tribune in Greeley County and Sharon Springs in Wallace County. Next Monday I will be in Madison in Greenwood County. The tour stops scheduled for today in Decatur and Norton Counties have been postponed due to the House Agriculture Committee Farm Bill field hearings.

Visit my website at www.house.gov/moranks01/ for times and locations and to stay up-to-date on tour stops that are still being scheduled.

Raising Money for Cancer Research with Hays High School DECA

Robba and I participated in a Relay for Life event Saturday to raise money for cancer research. We walked in the event sponsored by the Hays High School Distributive Education Clubs of America to raise money for research and programs for the American Cancer Society.

In the Office

In my office this week with KJIL radio of Meade were Delvin Kinser and Michael Luskey. They were in Washington, D.C., attending the National Prayer breakfast. On Tuesday, Tom Page of Wichita and Richard Edlund of Kansas City from the National Federation of the Blind were in to discuss the importance of accessibility to Braille textbooks, the need to create more employment opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired and the possibility of legislation to create a Louis Braille Commemorative Coin.

Craig and Connie Presley of Wichita, Michelle McElwain of Elk City and Howard Blankenship and Bryan Neal of Olathe were in to talk about the current contract negotiations between Air Traffic Controllers and the Federal Aviation Administration and possible solutions for both sides to come to an agreement. David Pollock of Hays was in representing the Kansas Association of Teachers of Science to discuss the importance of science literacy and promoting quality science

education.

On Wednesday, Judy and Larry Getty of Hays visited my office. Judy was in town with the Coalition of Higher Education Assistance Organizations advocating on behalf of Perkins Loans and other higher education financial aid issues. Kansas National Association of Letter Carriers representatives Sherwood Applegate of Wichita and Joan Spero of Kansas City were in to visit about postal reform legislation.

In Washington, D.C., to discuss agency priorities for the coming year including Republican River, Lake Hillsdale and conservation of the Flint Hills were representatives from Kansas water and natural resources agencies. Representatives included Secretary Adrian Polansky, Kansas Department of Agriculture; Tracy Streeter, Kansas Water Office; Ken Grotewiel, Kansas Water Office; and Greg Foley, State Conservation Commission.

Ken McCauley of White Cloud was in my office representing the National Corn Growers Association to talk about the options and forecast for ethanol, as well as the general health of the agriculture industry in Kansas. Also while in Washington, D.C., Ken spoke on behalf of the ethanol industry on a live Fox news program. In addition to my conversation with Ken, I also visited with railroad representatives this week about expanding opportunities for the agriculture industry as we work to meet our country's energy needs through ethanol production in Kansas.

In my office this week for a tour of the Capitol building were Phyllis and Harry Schmitt of Tipton and their daughter Sandy Law of Springfield, Virginia, with her husband, Robert, and their sons, Robert and Nicholas. Also in for tours were Ivan Koop of Ulysses, Chris and Dona Esplund of Minneola, Dr. Larry and Nancy Stoppel of Washington and Dr. Robin and Annette Hood of Concordia.

Very truly yours,

Jerry